**How to Document Quotes and Phrases**

*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*

Gibaldi, Joseph. "Plagiarism and Academic Integrity*." MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: Modern Language Association Of America, 2009. 51-60. Print.

**2.1.Definition of Plagiarism**

Derived from the Latin word plagiarius (“kidnapper”), to plagiarize means “to commit literary theft” and to “present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary [11th ed.; 2003; print]). Plagiarism involves two kinds of wrongs. Using another person’s ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work constitutes intellectual theft. Passing off another person’s ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud. Plagiarism is sometimes a moral and ethical offense rather than a legal one since some instances of plagiarism fall outside the scope of copyright infringement, a legal offense (see 2.7.4).

**2.2.Consequences of Plagiarism**

Students exposed as plagiarists may suffer severe penalties, ranging from **failure in the assignment or in the course to expulsion from school.** This is because student plagiarism does considerable harm. For one thing, it damages teachers’ relationships with students, turning teachers into detectives instead of mentors and fostering suspicion instead of trust. By undermining institutional standards for assigning grades and awarding degrees, student plagiarism also becomes a matter of significance to the public. When graduates’ skills and knowledge fail to match their grades, an institution’s reputation is damaged.

**2.4.Unintentional Plagiarism**

The purpose of a research paper is to synthesize previous research and scholarship with your ideas on the subject. Therefore, you should feel free to use other persons’ words, facts, and thoughts in your research paper, but the material you borrow must not be presented as if it were your own creation. When you write your research paper, remember that you must document everything that you borrow—not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas.

**2.6.When Documentation Is Not Needed**

In addition to documenting direct quotations and paraphrases, you should consider the status of the information and ideas you glean from sources in relation to your audience and to the scholarly consensus on your topic. In general, information and ideas you deem broadly known by your readers and widely accepted by scholars, such as the basic biography of an author or the dates of a historical event, can be used without documentation. But where readers are likely to seek more guidance or where the facts are in significant dispute among scholars, documentation is needed; you could attribute a disputed fact to the source with which you agree or could document the entire controversy. While direct quotations and paraphrases are always documented, scholars seldom document proverbs, sayings, and clichés. **If you have any doubt about whether you are committing plagiarism, cite your source or sources.**